

# INDEXA



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## TX4PG—From Austral to Marquesas

*edited excerpts from an article by Silvano Borsa, I2YSB*

After their 2003 Austral DXpedition, Silvano, I2YSB, and Adriano, IK2GNW, decided to organize a more ambitious activity from Marquesas where they would activate two or three stations. This required a lot of antennas, radios, and accessories so they formed a large group of experienced DXers to carry the weight and share the expenses. The team included Flaviano, I2MOV; Carlo, IK1AOD; Andrea, IK1PMR; Marcello, IK2DIA; and Beppe, IK2WXV.

Obtaining the CEPT license (FO/home call) was not complicated; it could easily be done by fax. Adriano decided to make it more complicated by asking for a special call to take advantage of the century celebration of the famous French painter Paul Gauguin who died on the Marquesas island on May 8th, 1903. The TX4PG special call was issued thanks to Sylvain, FO5RF, a friend met during the Austral DXpedition a year ago.

After months of planning, on April 25th the team embarked on their journey from the Milan Malpensa airport. Little did they know that Mr. Murphy would be hitching a ride!

Upon departure the team was carrying laptops and radios weighing approximately 12 kg and more than 160 kg was stowed in the hold. In Paris, security questioned Flaviano and Carlo—the former for the Kent



*The TX4PG DXpedition Team*

key, the latter for a 300W solid state amplifier. The metal was too much for the sensors and only the captain could authorize taking it aboard the Boeing 747 to Los Angeles and Papeete. After reassuring the captain that the radios could not be used during the flight, they received permission to embark on the aircraft.

When the team touched ground in Papeete they were warmly welcomed with the traditional shell necklace and flowers. As soon as they collected their luggage, they realized that Mr.

Murphy had orchestrated a peculiar welcome: a bag was missing—the one with the Steppir antenna motors as well as the cables for the radios and power! They were desperate and the time to embark on the next flight was short.

At the check-in counter, more bad news. Air Tahiti allowed only 3 kg of hand luggage. They couldn't take the risk of stowing their radios and laptops in the hold so they prepared to continue their journey with lighter

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wallets after paying 490 Euro to Air Tahiti for 84 kg excess weight.

There was some good news. After a while a distracted traveler brought back the missing bag which he collected by mistake. Now they felt much better.

When they landed in Nuku Hiva, the final destination of their trip, a pick-up and Land Rover were waiting for them at the airport. The weather was very bad: it was 30C° with a heavy rain and 100% humidity. They climbed to Takao mountain, 1220 meters above the sea, along a muddy road without parapets. The wheels of the cars skimmed the sheer drops.

After a 2-hr. drive, they finally arrived at Toovii, a plateau where they planned to install a station to facilitate contact with Europe. The other station would be in Taiohae, the main city, down in front of the ocean and closed by a mountain crown.

It was Sunday, April 27th, and the sun set early. At 1800 local time it was already dark. The rain was still heavy and the darkness made it impossible to install the beam antenna but as soon as possible they erected a 30-meter vertical and Beppe began to operate, announcing that TX4PG was on the air!

Adriano and Carlo remained in Toovii with Beppe for the next four days while the other operators left for Taiohae, another 45-minute drive in the dark, where Christiane and Claude, the owners of the Pension Pua, were waiting to accommodate them in two bungalows that would be



**Marquesas—  
a land of natural beauty!**

the second station. The night was still long and the rain still strong but, in spite of that, the R7 multiband vertical was rapidly erected and the second station was ready to operate. At sunrise they began to erect the 3-element 6 bander in order to complete the setup of the two stations close to the sea.

Then Silvano and Marcello left again for the station on the hill to complete the setup there. This was the main station with a TS-440 and an IC-706 MK, an amplifier TL-922, the 2-element Steppir, a vertical for 40/80, another vertical for 30m, a beam and a vertical for 6m.

The weather was still horrible. There were 20cm of water on the soil and the 80m vertical refused to work because of the immersed radials. Unfortunately, it was not possible to raise them out of the water because the horses were free to walk everywhere breaking all the wires.

In the morning, they knew Mr. Murphy was still with them when they learned that a strong storm dropped the 3-element antenna on the ground and a couple of elements were broken. The repair was not easy. It continued to rain, they were attacked by annoying mosquitoes (the locals call them "nono") and they didn't have the proper tools or spare tubes. The only solution was to sacrifice one element, a hard job for Silvano. Finally, the 2-element was ready and in spite of crooked tubes, the antenna was working well on all bands.

At Taiohae, the two stations were equipped with an FT-847 and the 2-element 6 bands, a TS-440 with 300W solid state amplifier and a vertical R7. Since the two stations were very close, a band filter was used to avoid interference.

Another problem occurred in the station on the hill. The TS-440 modulation was horribly distorted and operation was not possible. They were forced to use the spare IC-706 MK which they intended to dedicate to 6 meters. The magic band was monitored only during the most promising time.

The climate was really uncomfortable and even early mornings were hot and humid. Shopping required a 3 km walk in rain or scorching sun. And worse, the tap water at Marquesas was not drinkable and, when it was available, it was brown! In addition to technical and logistical problems, propagation did not assist them either, especially in the late morning and early afternoon.

In spite of challenges and visits from Murphy the team made 22,503 total QSOs: 12,667 QSOs in CW; 8,897 QSOs in SSB; and 1,029 QSOs in RTTY. In total they worked 132 DXCC countries.

The team thanks INDEXA for its support and invites visits to their Web site at <http://digilander.libero.it/i2ysb> for more information and photos.



**Assembling a 3-element beam**



**Silvano, I2YSB,  
holding the TX4PG mascot?**



## XE1CI: A Public Service Story—Conclusion

By Joan Gibson, KG1F, and reprinted with the permission of the ARRL from an article published in *QST*, March, 1989. Copyright ARRL.

**X**E1CI became the first YL to be elected National Director of the Mexican National Emergency Net, a chapter of Liga Mexicana de Radio Experimentadores, which is dedicated entirely to coordinating emergency communications when commercial communications fail and/or when human health or life are jeopardized.

"I became the National Director after a long period of being substitute regional director," said Nellie, "and during my administration I devised a filing system with cards, credentials and photographs of those who were active in the net. It was also at this time that we started the so-called 'Road Runner Operation.' Volunteers would cruise on the central turnpikes and main roads, using the newly born FM repeaters to help those in need of assistance, mechanical or otherwise."

During the period when Nellie was Assistant General Director of the Emergency Net, the Managua earthquake hit. XE1IJ was sent to Nicaragua by the Mexican President in 1971 to set up an emergency communications system. He was followed by other Mexican amateurs, as well as the IARU Region 2 President. "The plan was that these amateurs would help Nicaraguan amateurs resurrect their radio stations as well as set up equipment donated by the IARU. In Managua, the local broadcasting station, which miraculously survived the quake, announced that incoming and outgoing communications would be handled by a Mexican Amateur Radio team. We worked day and night to bring messages and help those affected by the catastrophe.

Three years later, XE1CI assisted the survivors of the Guatemalan earthquake. "After our success in Nicaragua and our common language, it was only natural that Mexican amateurs would be ready to help



**INDEXA director Nellie, XE1CI, and INDEXA vice president, "Pick," WA5PAE, representing INDEXA at the 2003 SWODXA dinner, Dayton, OH.**

their neighbors. I was assisted by several Mexican amateurs. Together we located relatives, food, medical supplies and, of course, handled traffic for the Red Cross and government.

"It is impossible to remember all the hurricanes, floods, air and sea vessel locations and emergencies I have worked on over the years. There were so many procedures and protocols I had to become familiar with in order to direct the Emergency Net."

One of the worst earthquakes in world history struck Mexico City on September 19, 1985. "My first reaction was to respond outside Amateur Radio operation, so I purchased two large bags of bread and took them to the Mexican Red Cross headquarters. I stayed there for several hours working with the Cardinal and Archbishop of the Mexican Catholic Church as well as various Red Cross personnel. Long-distance telephone service broke down, and, as one might expect, Amateur Radio stepped in."

Today, in the Liga Headquarters, there is a document which reports

over 300,000 QSOs logged during the disaster. Nellie and Amateur Radio colleagues were honored by the Mexican Congress, which gave the Aztec Eagle award, the country's most important civilian award, to Liga Mexicana de Radio Experimentadores.

XE1CI's world seemed to crumble when in the course of three years, her husband, father and brother died. "I had to take care of my brother's children, my mother and my three daughters. Suddenly, I found myself in charge of two textile mills, an office building and a curtain business. I was filled with fear and apprehension in having to assume such huge responsibilities. I had to manage all those businesses as well as be the head of the family. Luckily, the mill had wonderful employees. I went to school nights for two years to learn how to become a manager. The businesses already had a good system in place, so I used my common sense and established good human relations with my workers and customers. I made it! Now after 13 years, I am beginning to see the light again.

Due to family responsibilities and business commitments, XE1CI was not active for several years. "I did not have enough time to be on the air," recalls Nellie, "but when I did take a few moments to be in the shack, it gave me the breath to keep on living. Being an Amateur Radio operator all these years has given me the opportunity to have unique and really very special friends. Without their friendship, patience and support, I do not know what would have become of my life. Thanks to all of them, I am a better and more useful person."

*Editor's Note: INDEXA thanks Nellie, XE1CI, and the ARRL for their permission to reprint the above article by Joan Gibson, KG1F.*

## Election Results

The results of the election for the 2003-2004 directors and officers are as follows:

President: AA7UC  
Vice President: WA5PAE  
Secretary-Treasurer: W4UNP

Directors: DJ9ZB  
XE1CI  
ZL1AMO  
\*W9RG

\*Chairman

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